

I sit on the Maryland Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay representing Maryland's speech disabled citizens. Even though Maryland does not extensively mention its outreach programs for Speech-to-Speech relay in article 47 C.F.R. § 64.604, which is the Mandatory Minimum Standard of this proceeding (TRS Regulations), Maryland is doing everything possible to educate its speech disabled population, and others. However, whether or not it was listed specifically, Maryland does do outreach on Speech-to-Speech on a regular basis, and does intensive mailings to State wide speech pathologist, Maryland Speech and Language Assn, etc. Maryland submits contributed articles to various publications, and has a mailer regarding Speech-to-Speech (Maryland forgot to include this item in their re-certification package). Maryland also works closely with organizations that are established for and by speech disabled users, and mentions Speech-to-Speech in EVERY presentation they do.

I have a speech disability, and I find Speech-to-Speech relay an important aspect of my life especially in communicating with people over the phone. Many people with speech disabilities are afraid to use the phone for fear of people losing their patience, or having difficulty, in trying to understand their speech. There are many people with speech disabilities who do not know about Speech-to-Speech relay. This is due to a lack outreach programs in thier state.

Speech-to-Speech relay can greatly relieve this communication barrier for many people with speech disabilities. Communication by phone is a necessity in everybody's life, so why deny a person with a speech disability this right? Outreach programs in each and every state will certainly give people with speech disabilities this right as outreach programs will inform and educate everybody with telecommunications relay technologies. It is IMPORTANT that states make room in their budgets for extensive outreach programs for Speech-to-Speech, and other relay services. No one should be, regardless of a disability, left out in the cold -- so to speak.

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